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ON THE

PROPOSED REVISION

OF

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BY

HENRY CRAIK.

Second Edition.

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PREFACE.

THE following brief Treatise will be found to have been appended to a work, recently published by me, on the History and Characteristics of the Hebrew Language.

It has been thought well to publish it also in a separate form, for the accommodation of such as may feel an interest in the subject of Biblical Revision, and yet may not be disposed to purchase the larger work.

It is designed to furnish general readers with some information adapted to assist them in forming a correct judgment on the subject to which it relates. Such information is essentially requisite for all who would desire to qualify themselves for coming to any satisfactory decision on the question at issue, inasmuch as the decision of the question must ultimately rest on matters of fact.

After considerable investigation and repeated reflection, I have been led to take a middle course between the two extreme opinions which have been maintained in regard to the subject in question; and I have endeavoured to exhibit, with simplicity and clearness, such facts and illustrations as appear, to my own mind, confirmatory of the views which I have been led to adopt.

I commend the subject to the thoughtful and candid investigation of all who feel interested in the Word of God.

HENRY CRAIK.

ON THE REVISION OF OUR ENGLISH BIBLE.

ALL intelligent Christians in England must feel a greater or less degree of interest in the subject of the following pages. No one can truly understand the importance of the question at issue, without desiring to form a correct judgment respecting it. Yet there are many who seem to take little or no interest in the matter, and there are not a few others whose opinions appear to have been formed without any careful enquiry into the facts of the case, or any thoughtful consideration of the reasons that may be urged on both sides of the question at issue. The far larger number of those who reverence and prize their Bibles are so ill-informed respecting the grounds on which a revision is considered desirable, that they are not at present in a position to give any opinion which ought to weigh with others ; while often those who are the least instructed, are, at the same time, the most obstinately attached to the sentiments which they have been led to adopt.

In regard to matters of a worldly nature, people generally consider themselves bound to *examine* before they *decide*; but, while not one out of a thousand Christians is capable of judging of the perfect accuracy claimed by some for our common Translation, hundreds are ready to oppose the idea of its being capable of improvement. There are only two classes of Christians, it seems to me, whose judgment on such a question can be deemed of any real value; the class who have studied the original Scriptures for themselves; and the still larger class, who, though not in a position to judge from their own personal investigation, are yet well-informed respecting the sentiments of those who, from the whole course of their studies, and their Christian character, have a right to be heard in reference to the expediency or necessity of revising the Translation which has been so long in use amongst us. The decision of the question cannot be left entirely in the hands of Christian scholars; the vast body of upright and consistent Christians, who may not be acquainted either with Greek or Hebrew, ought to be deferred to, in a matter so important to their spiritual interests; but the judgments of this larger class must, to a great extent, be directed and guided by the information derived from the studious investigations of the few who have made the Original Scriptures, in whole or in part, the subject of their habitual study. I say, in whole or in part, for there

are many who have a right to be heard in reference to the Translation of the New Testament, who, being ignorant of Hebrew, can only judge at second-hand respecting the accuracy of our Version of the Old Testament.

Previously, then, to any direct steps being taken in so important and deeply responsible a movement as that to which the above remarks have reference, the diffusion of sounder views and larger information on the whole subject must be earnestly aimed at. The Christian mind of England must be enlightened. Prejudices, which are the natural progeny of ignorance, must be patiently met, and courteously removed. Christian scholars must seek to follow the example of Ezra, as recorded in the 8th chapter of Nehemiah, and endeavour to impart to the people the sense of the matter—the right understanding of the whole subject of Biblical Translation.

To this object the following pages are devoted, and, as preparatory to my own remarks, I judge it well to lay before the reader the truly moderate, judicious, and scholarly observations of two of the most distinguished of those who have given to the Christian Church the benefit of their judgment on this great question.

“It is clear that the question—Are we, or are we not, to have a new translation of Scripture? or rather,—since few would propose this who did not wish to lift anchor and loosen from its moorings the whole religious life of the

English people,—Shall we, or shall we not, have a new revision of the Authorised Version?—is one which is presenting itself more and more familiarly to the minds of men. This, indeed, is not by any means the first time that this question has been earnestly discussed; but that which distinguishes the present agitation of the matter from preceding ones is, that on all former occasions the subject was only debated among scholars and divines, and awoke no interest in circles beyond them. The present is apparently the first occasion on which it has taken serious hold of the popular mind. But now indications of the interest which it is awakening reach us from every side. America is sending us the instalments—it must be owned not very encouraging ones—of a New Version, as fast as she can. The wish for a revision has, for a considerable time, been working among Dissenters here; by the voice of one of these it has lately made itself heard in Parliament, and by the mouth of a Margaret Professor of Divinity in Convocation. Our Reviews, and not only those which are specially dedicated to religious subjects, begin to deal with the question of revision. There are, or a little while since there were, frequent letters in the newspapers, either urging such a step, or remonstrating against it; few of them, it is true, of much value or weight; yet at the same time showing how many minds are now occupied with the subject.

“It is manifestly a question of such immense importance, the issues depending on a right solution of it are so vast and solemn, that it may well claim a temperate and wise discussion. Nothing is gained on the one hand by vague

and general charges of inaccuracy brought against our version ; they require to be supported by detailed proofs. Nothing on the other hand is gained by charges and insinuations against those who urge a revision, as though they desired to undermine the foundations of the religious life and faith of England ; were Socinians in disguise, or Papists—Socinians, who hoped that in another translation the witness to the divinity of the Son and of the Spirit might prove less clear than in the present—Papists who desired that the authority of the English Scripture, the only Scripture accessible to the great body of the people, might be so shaken and rendered so doubtful, that men would be driven to their church, and to its authority, as the only authority that remained. As little is the matter profited, or in any way brought nearer to a settlement, by sentimental appeals to the fact that this, which it is now proposed to alter, has been the Scripture of our childhood, in which we and so many generations before us first received the tidings of everlasting life. All this, well as it may deserve to be considered, yet, as argument at all deciding the question, will sooner or later have to be cleared away ; and the facts of the case, apart from cries, and insinuations, and suggestions of evil motives, and appeals to the religious passions and prejudices of the day, apart, too, from feelings which in themselves demand the highest respect, will have to be dealt with in that spirit of seriousness and earnestness which a question affecting so profoundly the whole moral and spiritual life of the English people, not to speak of nations which are yet unborn, abundantly deserves.

“It is no main and leading purpose in the pages which follow, either to advocate a revision, or to dissuade one ; but rather I have proposed to myself to consider the actual worth of our present translation ; its strength, and also any weaknesses which may affect that strength ; its beauty, and also the blemishes which impair that beauty in part ; the grounds on which a new revision of it may be demanded ; the inconveniences, difficulties, the dangers it may be, which would attend such a revision ; some of the rules and principles, according to which it would need, if undertaken at all, to be carried out ; and thus, so far as this lies in my power, to assist others, who may not have been able to give special attention to this subject, to form a decision for themselves. I will not, in so doing, pretend that my own mind is entirely in equilibrium on the subject. On the whole, I am persuaded that a revision ought to come ; I am convinced that it will come. Not, however, let us trust, as yet ; for we are not as yet in any respect prepared for it ; the Greek (I mean that special Hellenistic Greek here required), this, and the English no less, which would be needful to bring this work to a successful end, might, it is to be feared, be wanting alike. There is much of crude and immature in nearly all the contributions which have been, and for some time yet will be made, to this object. Nor, certainly, do I underrate the other difficulties which would beset such an enterprise ; they look, some of them, the more serious to me the more I contemplate them. Still, believing that this mountain of difficulty will have to be surmounted, I can only trust and confidently hope that it, like so many other mountains,

will not on nearer approach prove so formidable as at a distance it appears. Only let the Church, when the due time shall arrive, address herself to this work with earnest prayer for the Divine guidance, her conscience bearing her witness, that in no spirit of idle innovation,—that only out of dear love to her Lord and His truth, and out of an allegiance to that truth which overbears every other consideration, with an earnest longing to present His Word, whereof she is the guardian, in all its sincerity to her children,—she has undertaken this hard and most perilous task, and in some way or other every difficulty will be overcome. Whatever pains and anxieties the work may cost her, she will feel herself abundantly rewarded, if only she is able to offer God's Word to her children, not, indeed, free from all marks of human infirmity clinging to its outward form,—for we shall have God's treasure in earthen vessels still,—but with some of those blemishes she knows of removed, and altogether approaching nearer to that which she desires to see it; namely, a work without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; a perfect copy of an archetype that is perfect!

“In the meantime, while the matter is still in suspense and debate, while it occupies, as it needs must, the anxious thoughts of many, it cannot misbecome those who have been specially led by their duties or their inclinations, to a more close comparison of the English version with the original Greek, to offer whatever they have to offer, be that little or much, for the helping of others towards a just and dispassionate judgment, and one founded upon evidence, in regard to the question at issue. And if they consider that

a revision ought to come, or, whether desirable or not, that it will come, they must wish to throw in any contribution which they have to make toward the better accomplishing of this object. Assuming that they have any right to mingle in the controversy at all, they may reasonably hope that even if much which they bring has long ago been brought forward by others, or must be set aside from one cause or another, yet that something will remain, and will survive that rigorous proof to which every suggestion of change should be submitted. And in a matter of such high concernment as this, the least is much. To have cast in even a mite into this treasury of the Lord, to have brought one smallest stone which it is permitted to build into the walls of His house, to have detected one smallest blemish that would not otherwise have been removed, to have made, in any way whatever, a single suggestion of lasting value, towards the end here in view, is something for which to be for ever thankful." (On the Authorised Version of the New Testament, &c., by Richard Chevenix Trench, D.D., Dean of Westminster. Parker, London, 1859, pp. 1—6.)

“What is the present state of feeling with regard to a revising of our present Version? It seems clear that there are now *three* parties among us. The first, those who, either from what seem seriously mistaken views of a Translation of the Holy Scripture, or from sectarian prejudice, are agitating for a *new* Translation. The second, those who are desirous for a revision of the existing Version, but who somewhat differ in respect of the proposed alterations and the principles on which they are to be intro-

duced. The third, those who from fear of unsettling the religious belief of weaker brethren are opposed to alterations of *any* kind ; positive and demonstrable error in the representation of the words of Inspiration being, in their judgment, less pernicious than change. Of these three parties, the first is far the smallest in point of numbers, but the most persistent in activities : the second class is daily increasing, yet at present greatly inferior both in numbers and influence to the third.

“ Which of these three parties will prevail ? We may fervently trust not the first. Independently of the extreme danger of unsettling the cherished convictions of thousands, of changing language that has spoken to doubting or suffering hearts, with accents that have been to them like the voice of God Himself,—independently of reversing a traditional principle of revision that has gained strength and reception since the days of Tyndale,—independently of sowing a strife in the Church, of which our children and children’s children may reap the bitter fruits—independently of all these momentous considerations,—have we any good reason for thinking that, in a mere literary point of view, it would be likely to be an improvement on the Old Translation ? The almost pitiable attempts that have appeared in the last twenty years, under the name of New Translations, the somewhat low state of Biblical scholarship, the diminishing and diminished vigour of the popular language of our day, are facts well calculated to sober our expectations, and qualify our self-confidence.

“ But are we unreservedly to join the third party ? God forbid. If we are truly and heartily persuaded that there

are errors and inaccuracies in our Version, if we know that though by far the best and most faithful translation that the world has ever seen, it still shares the imperfections that belong to every human work, however noble and exalted, if we feel and know that these imperfections are no less patent than remediable, then surely it is our duty to Him who gave that blessed Word for the guidance of man, through evil report and through good report, to labour by gentle counsels to supply what is lacking, and correct what is amiss, to render what has been blessed with great measures of perfection, yet more perfect, and to hand it down thus marked with our reverential love and solicitude, as the best and most blessed heritage we have to leave to them who shall follow us.

“It is in vain to cheat our own souls with the thought that these errors are either insignificant or imaginary. There *are* errors, there *are* inaccuracies, there *are* misconceptions, there *are* obscurities, not indeed so many in number, or so grave in character, as the forward spirits of our day would persuade us of,—but there *are* misrepresentations of the language of the Holy Ghost, and that man, who, after being in any degree satisfied of this, permits himself to lean to the counsels of a timid or popular obstructiveness, or who, intellectually unable to test the truth of these allegations, nevertheless permits himself to denounce or deny them, will, if they be true, most surely at the dread day of final account, have to sustain the tremendous charge of having dealt deceitfully with the inviolable Word of God.

“But are we to take no thought of the weaker brethren

whose feelings may be lacerated, or whose conscience may be offended by seeming innovations? That be far from us. We must win them by gentle wisdom, we must work conviction in their minds by showing how little, comparatively speaking, there is that is absolutely wrong,—how persuasively it may be amended,—how we may often recur to the expressions of our older Versions, and from those rich stores of language, those treasures of pure and powerful English, may find the very rectification we would fain adopt, the very translation we are seeking to embody in words. No revision of our Authorized Version can hope to meet with approval or recognition that ignores the labours of those wise and venerable men who first enabled our forefathers to read in their own tongue of the marvellous works and the manifold wisdom of God.

“Let there be, then, no false fears about a loving and filial revision of our present Version. If done in the spirit, and with the circumspection that marked the revision of that predecessor to which it owes its own origin and existence, no conscience, however tender, either will or ought to be wounded. Nay, there seems intimation in their very preface that our last translators expected that others would do to them as they had done to those who had gone before them; and if they could now rise from their graves and aid us by their counsels, which side would they take? Would they stay our hands if they saw us seeking to perfect their work? Would they not rather join with us, even if it led sometimes to the removal or dereliction of the monuments of their own labour, in laying out yet more straightly the way of divine Truth?

“How this great work is to be accomplished in detail is not for such a one as me to attempt to define. This only I will say, that it is my honest conviction that for any *authoritative* revision we are not yet mature, either in Biblical learning or Hellenistic scholarship. There is good scholarship in this country, superior probably to that of any nation in the world, but it has certainly not yet been sufficiently directed to the study of the New Testament (for of the New Testament only am I now speaking), to render any national attempt at a revision either hopeful or lastingly profitable. Our best and wisest course seems to be this—to encourage small bands of scholars to make independent efforts on separate books, to invite them manfully to face and court impartial criticism, and so by their very failure to learn practical wisdom, and out of their censures to secure coadjutors, and by their partial successes to win over the prejudiced and the gainsaying. If a few such attempts were to be made and they were to meet with encouragement and sympathy, such a stimulus would be given to Biblical studies that a very few years would elapse before England might be provided with a company of wise and cunning craftsmen into whose hands she might hopefully confide her jewel of most precious price.” (A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, by Rev. C. J. Ellicott, M.A., Preface, pp. xi.—xv.)

Having thus sought to secure the attention of the reader to the following suggestions, I proceed to state some of the grounds on which I am ready to maintain the expediency of revising our English Translation of the Scriptures.

1. I undertake to prove, before any jury of qualified scholars, that, while our English Version is, probably, the very best of all modern Translations: yet there are to be found in it hundreds of passages in which the sense of the Original is rendered *obscurely*, or *unintelligibly*, or *in which the meaning is entirely misrepresented*. I maintain that by a careful revision, many passages which are, to mere English readers, obscure, would become plain; others which convey no meaning, would be rendered in intelligible language; and many which at present convey a wrong impression of the sense, would be found to express the meaning with accuracy and clearness.

2. That no intelligent reader of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures can attempt, honestly and fully, to expound the meaning of the Scriptures in public, without being under the necessity of frequently correcting our Translation, in order more accurately to bring out the sense, and that, therefore, it is requisite that some effort should be made to furnish the readers of our English Bible with suitable helps towards the correction of passages which are incorrectly rendered.

3. That the question relative to the matter at issue ought not to be looked at, or decided, under the influence of feeling or predilection, but, like all similar questions, must be determined according to

the facts of the case. Such facts constitute the basis of all reasoning on the subject. I therefore now proceed to lay before the reader the following *facts*, *reasonings*, and *suggestions*, which I commend to the thoughtful and prayerful attention of all such as desire to arrive at well-founded convictions in reference to the matter before us.

The excellency of our Authorised Translation is universally admitted. Who can deny that this superiority is due, in great measure, to the fact, that in it we have the result of successive revision? To treat with some fullness this part of the subject, it may be well to trace the history of the Version used in the Western Church. One of the most ancient, and, for the New Testament, the most valuable Translation, has been well-named by critics the "Ante-Hieronymian," or "Version before Jerome." It is the same which used to be less properly designated "The Italic." The Old Testament part was merely a version of the Septuagint (or Greek translation), and is therefore of only secondary importance. The New Testament part was unquestionably made from the Original, and, probably, about the middle of the Second century, or about 50 years after the death of the Apostle John. In distinction from the Vulgate Version, we may call it the "Old Latin." It must have been made from Greek MSS. older by about two centuries than any now known to exist, and it therefore represents to us, in the way of

Translation, the most ancient text of the Greek Testament. Its value is inestimable, and one can hardly look upon it without a peculiar feeling of gratitude and reverence. No complete copy of it remains, but enough is extant to aid us in determining its character, and, in the case of disputed readings, its authority ranks very high indeed. The name of the translator is entirely unknown, but the style of the Version renders it almost certain that it was made in North Africa, inasmuch as it abounds in examples of a phraseology peculiar to the North-African writers. This continued to be the standard Translation for all Latin-speaking Christians until the time of Jerome. By that time the copies had become very much corrupted, and greatly differed from one another. Jerome, having translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew, slightly revised the Latin Translation of the New. The two together make up the present Vulgate. The Vulgate, (with the exception of the Psalms, which is mostly a Translation from the LXX.,) is made up of a translation, by Jerome, of the Old Testament, and a slight revision of the Latin New Testament previously in use.

We have therefore in the New Testament part of the Codex Amiatinus—(the most exact copy of the Vulgate as left by Jerome at present extant)—substantially the very Version of the Greek Scriptures which was read in North Africa, in the Second

century of the Christian era. The character of the translator may, to some extent, be gathered from his work. He must have been possessed of a fair knowledge both of Greek and Latin. His aim was evidently not to display his learning or eloquence, but to exhibit a faithful representation of his original. A close examination of this Ancient Version, and a careful comparison of its renderings with the corresponding passages in the Greek, may serve, in a remarkable manner, to illustrate the defectiveness of the Latin language as compared with the other classic tongue of antiquity. The effort to translate from Greek into Latin may be likened to that of a musician attempting to make some very inferior instrument give forth the notes which another has just elicited from a full-toned organ. Whether we regard precision or copiousness, the language of ancient Rome is very far inferior indeed to that of ancient Greece; and therefore no Latin Version of the New Testament can, in all respects, adequately represent the Original. The Translator, in such a case, must be repeatedly impeded by being compelled to use a less perfect medium of communication than that employed by the inspired writers; and in the ancient Latin Version there occur repeated instances of defective translation, originating in the imperfection of the grammatical structure, and the limited vocabulary of the Latin, as compared with the Greek. The revision of the Old Latin Version by Jerome, was executed

about 384 A.D.; after that date, the older edition and the revised continued both in use for a considerable period, until gradually the superiority of the latter was universally acknowledged, and thus the Old Latin gave place to that which, in general terms, may be described as the work of Jerome. Centuries before the Council of Trent, the Vulgate had been the Standard Translation of the Scriptures throughout the whole Western Church.

For about 1000 years that venerable version held — throughout Christendom — almost supreme authority: (so that when, by the decree of the Tridentine fathers in 1546, it was declared to be the Authentic and Standard version of the Catholic Church,) probably very few considered themselves as chargeable with any disrespect to the original Scriptures, or as introducing any innovation. So completely was the Vulgate Translation spoken of as emphatically the very Word of God, that in a work published in 1498, a Roman Catholic theologian thus comments upon the statement in Genesis i. 10; “The gathering together of the waters called He seas.” The Latin term for seas is “*Maria*.” On this ground, the writer asks, “What is the gathering together of the waters but the accumulation of all graces into one place, that is, into the Virgin Mary? (*Maria*.) But there is this distinction, that *Maria* (the seas), has the (i) short, because that which the seas contain is only of a transitory nature, while the gifts

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and graces of the blessed Virgin (Maria) shall endure for ever.”

This brief sketch of the history of the Vulgate may serve to show its claims to our regard. Its different portions indicate its different origin. It seems to me, with all deference to more qualified judges, that the more elegant and paraphrastic style of the Old Testament part corresponds with the historical fact of its being the work of Jerome; while the remarkable literality and peculiar phraseology of the New Testament serves to show how very slight were the alterations which the learned father thought it expedient to make upon the Version previously in use. Let any one read in his Greek Testament the 11th of Matthew, for example, and then peruse the same chapter, successively, in the old Latin, in the Vulgate, and in our Common Translation; and he will be delighted to find a remarkable illustration of the foreseeing care of God over His own Word. All who will take the pains to make the experiment, will find that, substantially, the very same Gospels and Epistles, read in North Africa in the Second century of the Christian era, are now read in our own England, and throughout the whole world. During the prevalence of the Latin Vulgate in Europe, the Greek Testament was almost entirely unknown. Divine truth, originally given forth in Hebrew and Greek, had been for ages consigned to the keeping of a Latin Translation; and when, at the revival of

learning, the originals became the subjects of earnest study, it was evident, that although many errors, more or less important, had crept into the copies of the Version, and some very serious mis-translations had from the first been retained in it, yet the essential truths set forth in the writings of prophets, evangelists, and apostles, were found to have been preserved in the Version, taken as a whole.

I have thus minutely dwelt upon the origin and history of the Vulgate, because of its very important bearing upon all the leading translations circulated in Modern Europe. Upon it, all the Roman Catholic Versions, in English or in other modern languages, are with very few exceptions, confessedly based; in fact, generally speaking, all such Versions are mere translations from that which is still regarded as the Authentic and Standard edition of the Scriptures in the Roman Catholic church. Its very great antiquity; its extensive and long-continued prevalence; the peculiarity and importance of some of the errors contained in it; the controversies connected with some of its mis-renderings; the influence which, whether directly, or by means of Modern Translations, it is even now exercising on the minds of vast numbers of nominal Christians—all combine to call the attention of Biblical scholars to its excellencies and defects. But few appear to me to be aware of the influence which, in all probability, the New Testament part, at least, must have exerted on the

Protestant Translations which have been published since the era of the Reformation, in the several countries of Europe, Asia, and America. Our own Protestant Bible will be found to bear internal evidence of the influence exerted by the Vulgate on the minds of the early translators. Wycliffe's Translation, as is well known, was not made from the originals, but simply from the Latin. At the date of its publication, about 1380, or nearly 1000 years after Jerome's revision of the Old Latin, Hebrew and Greek were unknown even to the most eminent scholars and theologians in England; so that, if the Scriptures were to be given to the people in the vernacular language, it was absolutely necessary to translate from the Vulgate. When Tyndale, about the year 1525, published that Version of the New Testament which was destined to be the basis of all our leading Protestant Translations, it is true that he took as the basis of his text the Greek Original. I doubt whether, in any instance, he consciously retained anything from the Vulgate, if not confirmed by the Greek Text. His scholarship, his diligence, his faith, courage, zeal, and purity of life, all combined to render him, indeed, an instrument suited for such a work; and, without desiring in any way to disparage the claims of other labourers in the same field, to Tyndale more than to any other single individual, it appears to me we are indebted for the inestimable gift of our English Bible. Still, although

his Version is derived not from the Latin, but, in the strictest sense, from the Greek, he must have been familiar from his youth with the Vulgate, and been thus led unconsciously to follow, in several instances, its interpretation of the meaning of the inspired writers.

Coverdale, Rogers, Cranmer, and even Parker and his coadjutors, were all, probably, more or less, under the same influence; so that, when the scholars appointed by King James to revise the Authorized Version, entered upon their arduous labours, they had before them several successive translations,—all more or less modified by the fact of their having been either executed, or edited, by Theologians who had been readers of the Vulgate, before they had acquired any acquaintance with the Greek Original. Even the Geneva Version,—although very distinct from the other translations already referred to,—was probably modified by the Latin in some instances. In John x. 16, where Tyndale had rightly given “*one flock and one shepherd*,” the Geneva of 1557 (followed by that of 1560), gives “*one sheep-fold and one shepherd*.” The Bishop’s Bible follows the Geneva, and hence our Authorized, to this day, retains the mistake. The origin of the error is found in the Latin “*ovile*,” “sheep-fold,” instead of “*grex*,” “flock.”

It is well for those who are interested in such subjects, to notice the order of succession, and the age of the several English Versions that were published previously to the date of our Authorized Bible.

Tyndale's first edition of the New Testament in 1525 was republished in a revised form in 1534. Coverdale published the whole Bible in 1537. Rogers (under the name of Matthews) published another edition about the same time. The Great Bible, a revision of that of Rogers, probably by Coverdale, appeared in 1539. Cranmer's,—very nearly the same as the last-mentioned,—was given to the world in 1540. One Geneva Version, probably by William Whittingham, was published in 1557, and may be regarded as preparatory to the Version by the Geneva Translators, published along with their Translation of the Old Testament, in 1560, which latter is to be regarded as "*The Geneva Translation.*" The Bishop's Bible appeared in 1568, and continued to be the edition used in the churches, until it was superseded by that which, for about 250 years, has retained its place as the standard edition of the English Bible.

In the preparation of that edition, the revisers were required to retain the rendering of the Bishop's Bible in every case where faithfulness to the Original did not necessitate alteration; and, if alteration should be requisite, the needful correction was to be sought, in the first place, in some one of the former leading Protestant Translations. Only if those failed to furnish such correction were the revisers to act on their own responsibility. It is obvious that, under such limitations, they could hardly be regarded as

translators in the ordinary sense of the word. They were, moreover, strictly required to retain the old Ecclesiastical terms.

Limited as they were by the regulations of their royal patron, they accomplished a work which has been the means of incalculable benefit to England and America, and the beneficial influence of which has been diffused over the whole world.

As we trust that their spirits have long been reposing in the paradise of God, so we would cherish on earth a reverential regard for their memory. It might have been well that they had been left at greater freedom, and that, in some respects, their work had more resembled a Re-translation; but, on the other hand, it is pleasant to think that thus, through our English Bible, we are linked to the martyrs of the Reformation, and that we read, substantially, the very book on which Tyndale, Coverdale, and Rogers, expended their hours of sacred study. The men to whom we owe our English Translation were not mere scholars or theologians; they were giants in faith and devotedness to God. They counted not their lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy. They received as the reward of their toil, not the applause, but the opposition of their fellow-men. They had before them, not the prize of scholarship, but the crown of martyrdom. Tyndale, betrayed and condemned by his treacherous and cruel enemies, and unaided by those who ought to

have protected him, died by the hand of the executioner in a foreign land, leaving behind him a stainless and imperishable name. Rogers was the first who suffered martyrdom in the Marian Persecution, and Miles Coverdale was permitted, at a very advanced age, to experience the trials of poverty. The very circumstances under which our English Bible was translated, are fitted to endear it to our hearts. As the original writers of the Gospels and Epistles were exposed, while they wrote, to the perils of fiery persecution, and were under no temptation to follow cunningly devised fables, or to seek, by adaptation to the popular taste, for reputation or applause; so the translators of our Bible were not so situated as to be influenced by worldly motives, connected either with fame or outward distinction. Their present reward consisted in the consciousness of being engaged in doing the will of God, and in benefiting their fellow-men; their ultimate reward will be the crown of glory which fadeth not away, bestowed on them in the great day of manifestation.

Surely every intelligent reader must perceive how unfounded is the charge of innovation brought against those who would advocate still further revision, with a view to increasing the accuracy of that which is already on the whole so faithful. For nearly one hundred years the best scholars and holiest men in England devoted their labours to the improvement of our Translation, and that with

acknowledged success. Why should we refuse to cherish the hope that still further improvement would be the result of efforts made by the Christian scholars of our own day? During the long period that has passed away since the last revision, the Greek Language has been more carefully studied than at any former period; and, in respect of the minutiae of Greek Grammar, modern scholars are far in advance of those who flourished in the early part of the Seventeenth century. Whether from defect of knowledge, or from laxity, or inattention, the early Translators have repeatedly failed in the exact renderings of the Greek Tenses, and in other points in regard to which modern scholars, whether in England or on the Continent, would not be likely to fall into similar mistakes.

During the last two centuries, and especially since the beginning of the present, immense stores of information have been accumulated, fitted, in various ways, to assist the diligent student of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. Not only have the original languages been more accurately studied, but much progress has been made in our acquaintance with the Antiquities, the Geography, the Botany, the Natural History, &c., of the Bible; and recent discoveries in Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon have furnished helps for the better understanding and more correct translation of our Sacred Books. Surely it is desirable that all who are interested in the written Word of

God should be enabled to derive profit and instruction from the valuable results of so much laborious research, and so many important discoveries.

But, besides the reasons obviously resulting from the present advanced state of Biblical scholarship, revision is requisite on other grounds.

Our last revisers left some manifest errors of their predecessors uncorrected; in some instances they altered for the worse; they retained, in other cases, terms now unintelligible to ordinary readers; they very frequently varied the rendering of Hebrew or Greek words without the slightest necessity, and have thus obscured the meaning of the sacred writers; on the other hand, they have sometimes represented by the same English word, terms which, in the Original, are used to express very distinct meanings.

There is one other weighty reason for seeking to improve our present Translation, to which I can only very briefly refer. The collation of Ancient MSS. of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures has led, in many instances, to the correction of the Original Text from which our Version was derived. Even those whose tendencies are most conservative must be constrained to admit that the Received Text, from which, for the most part our Translation was made, contains no small number of passages which a more exact acquaintance with the best authorities would require us to expunge, or modify, or correct. There are also some insertions for which the same authorities

demand admission into the text. In regard to such alterations in the received Greek Text, prudence would require that they should be made with the greatest caution. It would be well that none should be allowed, but such as are warranted by the most satisfactory evidence; and, whether in the way of excision or addition, nothing should be done rashly, or without the concurrence of those critics best qualified to decide in points of so great delicacy and importance.

I now go on to produce some instances of antiquated terms, or erroneous or defective renderings in our English Bible, as fitted to illustrate the reasonableness and expediency of its being subjected to still further revision.

In Genesis xlv. 6, Joseph thus addresses his brethren:

“Yet there are five years in which there shall be neither earing nor harvest.”

Again in Exodus xxxiv. 21, a similar expression occurs:

“In earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest.”

Repeatedly, in conversation with intelligent readers of the English Scriptures, I have found that the meaning of “earing time” was altogether misapprehended. Many being unacquainted with the old English verb “to ear,”—equivalent to the modern term “to plough,” are led to connect the expression “earing” with ears of corn, and are thus entirely

misled as to the period of the year intended. For "earing" we ought to substitute the modern word "ploughing."

A corresponding correction is required in the following passages :

"A rough valley which is neither eared nor sown."
(Deut. xxi. 4),

ought to be read "which has neither been ploughed nor sown."

"To ear his ground." (I. Samuel viii. 12),
should be "to plough his ground."

In Isaiah xxx. 24, the Hebrew term rendered "ear" in the clause :

"The young asses that ear the ground,"
is different from that occurring in the instances given above, but the meaning is nearly the same.

In II. Kings xxiii. 6, we find a statement which must have startled many a thoughtful reader :

"And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, &c."

We read also, in II. Kings xvii. 10, and elsewhere, of "groves" being set up on every high hill and under every green tree.

Now, in such passages no reader of ordinary understanding can fail to perceive that the word "groves"

cannot possibly be taken in its usual signification. But still, he is left entirely to conjecture what meaning it is intended to convey.

In the above passages, and in many others where the word "grove," either in the singular or plural, is found in our Version, the Hebrew term is employed either as the name of the Syrian goddess Astarte, or is applied to images of that divinity, or perhaps, in some cases, to idolatrous images in general.

Thus in Judges iii. 7, we should read:

"The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and Asheroth," or the Baals and the Astartes, (*i.e.* the male and female divinities of their idolatrous neighbours.)

In Judges vi. 35, "the grove" should be "the image of Astarte," see also, verses 26, 28, 30.

In I. Kings xv. 13, Asa is said to have removed his mother, Maachah, from being queen,

"Because she had made an idol in a grove."

The correct rendering of the Hebrew conveys a very different piece of information, "because she had dedicated an image to Astarte," (or made an image of Astarte.)

In I. Kings xviii. 19:

"The prophets of the groves,"

ought to be "the prophets of Astarte."

II. Kings xiii. 6, for

"There remained the grove also in Samaria,"

read "and also the image of Astarte continued to stand in Samaria."

Correct in a similar way, II. Kings xvii. 16 ; xviii. 4 ; xxi. 3, &c. In verse 7, read "graven image of Astarte."

Similar alterations are required in the corresponding passages in II. Chronicles.

In II. Kings xxiii. 7, we have two mis-renderings in one brief clause.

"The women wove hangings for the grove,"

ought to read "the women wove shrines [lit., houses or receptacles], for Astarte." In this instance the one error evidently led to the other. A house, receptacle or shrine for a grove, was so incongruous an expression, that it was deemed absolutely needful to depart from the obvious signification of one of the simplest terms in the language. The application of the term for a house to a consecrated tent or shrine for an idol, is entirely in accordance with the nature of the case ; the rendering "hangings," conveys either no meaning at all, or one totally inapposite ; besides being without any philological warrant. In this instance, neither the LXX., nor the Vulgate furnish any sanction to the rendering "hangings." The Greek interpreters leave the Hebrew word untranslated, and insert a barbarous term which appears like a wrongly spelt representation of the original: the Vulgate renders "little houses," *i.e.*, "receptacles" or "shrines." The Geneva Version of 1560 gives exactly the same words as those

employed by our translators. In the margin of our Version we find the word "houses," which is the correct rendering of the Hebrew.

In Judges ix. 53, we read :

"And a certain woman cast a piece of a mill-stone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his skull."

In other editions, more correctly printed, instead of "break" we find "brake."

If read in the former way, the "to" is taken as the sign of the infinitive, and the clause must be understood as expressing only the purpose or intention of the woman. If, on the other hand, we find "brake" in our copy of the Bible, except we happen to be acquainted with the obsolete expression "all to," the passage will be quite unintelligible. Few readers are aware that "all to" is equivalent to "altogether," "entirely," "wholly." The verb in the Hebrew being in the intensitive form, expresses the completeness of the act. "She completely broke his skull." So the Vulgate, "et confregit cerebrum ejus." "And broke his skull in pieces." The Italian of Diodati, to the same purpose, "e gli spezzò il teschio," and the French of Ostervald, "et lui cassa le crâne." The Geneva (1560), gives "and brake his braine pan."

The obsolete expression "all to," occurs in Luke vii. 38, and xv. 20, as rendered in the Bishop's Bible of 1568.

In the former instance it is said of the woman,

"And all to kissed his feet ;"

in the latter place we find it applied to the father of the prodigal son,

“And all to kissed him.”

In both cases, the object of the translators obviously was, to exhibit the intensity of the verb used in the Original. So utterly, however, has the old adverb fallen into disuse, that not one reader in a thousand would readily understand its meaning.

In Judges xv. 19, in connection with the history of Samson, we read :

“But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw and there came water thereout ; and, when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived ; wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.”

The term rendered “jaw,” is precisely the same which is translated “Lehi” in the close of the verse, and ought to have been taken as the proper name of a place in both instances. This error is found both in LXX. and the Vulgate, and is reproduced in the Geneva Version. It is quite true that our translators have inserted “Lehi” in the margin, but very many Bibles are printed without the marginal readings. Even those who use the fuller editions, containing the readings in question, are very likely to pass them by without notice.

In Psalm xxii. 21, we read :

“Save me from the lion’s mouth ; for Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn.”

This Version is unquestionably erroneous. The verse may bear either of the two following renderings :

“Save mē from the lion’s mouth, and hear me (*i.e.* deliver me) from the horns of the unicorns.”

Or,

“Save me from the lion’s mouth, and from the horns of the unicorns. Thou hast heard me, &c.”

I could not give any full account of my reasons for preferring the latter of the two modes of rendering the verse, without entering into the minutiae of Hebrew Grammar and accentuation. Either way is grammatically possible, but the whole connexion of the passage and the structure of the Psalm lead me to prefer the latter. When thus read, the words—“Thou hast heard me”—serve to divide the Psalm into two entirely distinct, yet closely connected, parts. From the commencement down to this triumphant utterance the language has been that of an afflicted suppliant, almost overwhelmed by the crushing weight of his sorrows, and the terrible fierceness of his enemies. In verse 22, there begins a strain of joyousness, gratitude, and praise. The delivered suppliant expresses His purpose to unfold to His brethren the character of that God unto whom He Himself had cried in the hour of His mysterious anguish, and from whom He had Himself experienced such complete deliverance.

For a period of twenty or thirty years I have been in the habit of so understanding the 21st verse of Psalm xxii. Only a few days ago, having consulted the Chaldee Targum on the Psalms, I found that the old Paraphrast had given the same version of the words. He gives—"Thou hast received my prayer."

Such are a very few specimens of passages in the Old Testament requiring alteration. Would the correction of such manifest mistakes, in any wise, deteriorate our English Bible? Would not the corrected copy be more adapted for edification than that in which so many similar instances of erroneous renderings are to be found? Does such an emendation as that to which the attention of the reader has just been directed effect nothing in the way of illustrating the structure and coherency of the Psalm? Can we honestly pray that we may enjoy the enlightening and quickening energy of the Holy Spirit, in enabling us to understand and enjoy His Word more fully, and yet remain indifferent as to the measure of accuracy with which our English Bible represents the meaning of the inspired writers? Surely it becomes those who, by the leadings of Divine providence, and, by mental taste and adaptation for such pursuits, have been induced to devote their best hours to the prayerful study of the Original Scriptures, to endeavour to turn their acquirements to profitable account, not merely with a view to their own profit, but for the spiritual benefit of their fellow

Christians. Could I only be satisfied that I had the warrant of Him whom all true Christians worship as Head of His Church, I would gladly retire for a season from all other service, that, free from outward interruptions, I might carefully prepare a somewhat extended statement of those instances in which, I conscientiously believe, the Common Translation fails to represent the meaning conveyed by the Original. Such a work, if entered upon in a spirit of dependence and prayerful diligence, might be helpful, in some measure, to those who are unable to examine such passages, or to consult critical authorities for themselves. But, in so responsible an undertaking, two, or rather, as many qualified labourers as can be obtained, are better than one. Circumstances seem to forbid the prospect of a revision being undertaken at present, by authority. For that step the time is not yet come.

A voluntary association of Christian men belonging to different sections of the visible Church, and composed of such as have given satisfactory evidence of some measure of qualification for the work, might do far more than any single individual scholar acting on his own responsibility, and without the opportunity of being aided by friendly conference with others. The agreement of trustworthy revisers in the alterations proposed, would carry along with it great weight in the estimation of Christians in general.

Having referred to a very few, but not unimportant, examples of passages in the Old Testament requiring correction, I would further illustrate the necessity of revision, by reference to one or two mis-renderings in the New Testament.

I once asked an intelligent young man who was looking forward to being engaged in the Gospel ministry, whether all the Apostles were Jews by birth. He replied at once in the negative, and referred to the statement in the Gospel by Matthew, x. 4. There it is stated expressly that one of the twelve was Simon, the Canaanite. If our Translation is to be relied on in this particular, then undoubtedly the negative answer was the correct one. But every reader of the Original knows that the term rendered "Canaanite," (in Matthew x. 4, and Mark iii. 18), is equivalent to the term "Zelotes," employed by Luke, xi. 15. In Matthew and Mark, the Hebrew term for a Zealot (*i.e.* one belonging to the sect of the Zealots), is employed with a Greek termination; in Luke's Gospel, the Greek term is adopted. The meaning in all three is the same.

In Matthew xii. 40, "whale," ought to read "great fish." A translator ought not to aim at being more definite than the writer whose meaning he undertakes to represent. There is no authority for asserting that the whale was the species of fish to which the narrative refers.

In the account given of Herod's conduct towards John the Baptist, in Matthew xiv. 6, as compared with Mark vi. 24, there is an apparent discrepancy which is entirely due to a mis-translation in the narrative of the former. The term rendered "before instructed," ought to be translated "being instigated." It does not refer to any previous instruction by which the mother might have prepared the daughter to ask for the life of the distinguished prophet, but to the fact that, after the promise had been uttered by the King, Herodias asked direction from her mother as to the request. This erroneous translation is to be found in the Vulgate, and has kept its ground ever since. Tyndale reads,—evidently misled by the Latin, "præmonita a matre,"—"being informed of her mother before." The Geneva, 1557, and also that of 1560, as well as the Bishop's Bible of 1568, agree with our own Version; or rather, our last Translators left the passage as they found it.

In Mark xxiii. 24, the term "strain," is generally mis-understood because of the accompanying preposition "at." "To strain," may mean either "to purify by filtration," or, "to make violent efforts." The Greek term can only be used to express the former notion. Accordingly we find in Tyndale, in both Geneva Versions, and in the Bishop's Bible, "strain out." There is every reason for believing that the

reading "strain at," in our Authorized Translation, is due to a mistake of the printer.

In I. Thessalonians v. 22 :

"Abstain from all appearance of evil,"

has been more correctly given in the Geneva, 1557,— "abstain from all kind of evil." I find "appearance" in the Geneva, 1560, and also in the Bishop's Bible. Our Translators are, therefore, not responsible for introducing this rendering, but only for leaving it uncorrected.

The same remark applies to John x. 16. Tyndale gives :

"And there shall be one flocke and one Shepherde."

The Geneva, 1557, altered "flocke" into "sheep-folde;" the Geneva, 1560, and the Bishop's Bible, 1568, retained the alteration, and our Translators left the rendering as they found it ; while they ought to have restored the correct rendering given by Tyndale.

I may here remark, that an acquaintance with the previous Versions may often furnish considerable assistance in the detecting and correction of the errors that yet remain in our Authorized Translation. The Version of 1568—having been the basis of the present one—particularly deserves to be consulted, and yet I suspect it is less known, particularly in the New Testament part, than some of the others. Many derive their knowledge of the leading Translations produced in the sixteenth century entirely from

Bagster's Hexapla ; but the plan of that very valuable work necessarily excluded the Geneva of 1560, and the very important Version of 1568. The Geneva of 1557, given in the Hexapla, is a Version of very great value, but it is entirely distinct from that of 1560. As an illustration of the distinction between the two, if the reader will take the trouble to compare the translation of Matthew xx. and xxi., as given in the Geneva of the Hexapla, with the same chapters as represented by the Geneva Translators in the edition of 1560, he will find that there are about eighty differences between them. Within the compass of those two chapters, the earlier Version retains 74 renderings from Tyndale, which are found altered in that of 1560.

I have reason to think that very many, accustomed to the use of the Hexapla, have received the impression that the second Geneva, published in 1560, along with the Old Testament, was merely a reprint of the former. It would be nearer the truth to represent the earlier Version as, in a good measure, a revised edition of Tyndale, and the second as almost a new Translation. The earlier one was probably the work of William Whittingham, and was only preparatory to the other, in which Whittingham was associated with several others of the exiles at Geneva. In the article "Versions," in Kitto's "Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature," the learned writer has inadvertently made a statement, in relation to this

matter, contrary to fact. After referring to the Version of 1560, of which he says:—"The work is a new Translation from the Original, not simply a revision of any former Version. It is faithful and literal." He adds—"The New Testament portion was reprinted by Bagster in his Hexapla." A single glance at the top of the page containing the Geneva Version suffices to inform the reader that the reprint is from that of 1557.

In Acts xix. 37, the expression "robbers of churches" has been improperly retained in our English Bible. The Version of Tyndale, having been uncorrected, in this instance, in the Bishop's Bible, was allowed to remain; but the Geneva of 1560 would have furnished the more accurate rendering:

"Ye have brought hither these men which have neither committed sacrilege, neither do blaspheme your goddess."

The Rheims Version, in a similar way, had given the verse thus:

"For you have brought these men, being neither sacrilegious nor blaspheming your goddess."

The rendering of I. Timothy, vi. 2, as found in our Authorized Version, is wanting in accuracy and clearness. Every reader of the Greek Testament, familiar with the simplest rules respecting the use of the Greek article, will at once detect the mistake.

The English is scarcely intelligible: the Greek expresses the sense without the slightest ambiguity:—

“And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because those who receive the benefit are believers and beloved.”

In this instance, had our Translators consulted the Vulgate or its representative, the Rheims Version, they would have found the more correct rendering ready to their hand.

In I. Timothy, v. 4, the term “nephew,” in the sense of “grandchild” or other descendant, is likely to mislead ordinary readers, on a point of much practical importance. The obligation, however much it may morally and spiritually belong to other blood-relations, is expressly laid, not upon nephews, but upon connexions in the direct line of descent. In this case the early Versions appear to have guided the Revisers of 1611: the term “nephew” being formerly used in the sense of “grandson.” It is so used by Hooker—the eloquent author of “The Ecclesiastical Polity,”—who died just a little before King James I. ascended the throne. It may safely be affirmed that not one reader out of a thousand is aware of the word having changed its meaning, inasmuch as it is never used in its former signification by those who speak or write modern English.

Among the many examples of carelessness in attending to the force of the article, we may instance I. Timothy, vi. 5. The Apostle, describing the characteristics of certain false teachers, asserts that they are—

“Men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that godliness is gain,” (not “gain is godliness.”)

i.e. regarding godliness as a means of promoting their own temporal advantage. In this instance, Tyndale, the Geneva of 1557 and 1560, the Bishop’s Bible, and the Rheims Version, agree in disregarding the article, and consequently misrepresenting the meaning.

In Luke xiv. 8, 10, “room,” ought to be altered into “place.” The term “conversation,” which is of such frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, is never used in the modern sense of the word, but almost always as denoting “conduct,” “deportment,” “behaviour,” or “general course of life.” It is found only twice in the Old Testament, viz., Psalm xxxvii. 14, and Psalm l. 23, and answers to the Hebrew “derek,” in the sense of “way,” as given in the margin. In I. Peter, iii. 1, I suspect that many readers understand the Apostle as employing the word “conversation,” in the modern sense of “familiar intercourse.” There can be no question that the “behaviour,” or “habitual conduct” of the wife, is that to which the sacred writer refers. In Philippians iii. 20, the Greek word rendered “conversation” denotes “citizenship,” or rather “commonwealth,” or “polity.”

The rendering "conversation" in the above passage was introduced by Tyndale, and retained by those that followed him.

In Hebrews xiii. 5, the word so rendered is entirely different from the term elsewhere translated "conversation;" and appears to me to denote rather "disposition" or "turn of mind;" although also capable of designating the "course of life," or "habitual behaviour."

In Romans vi. there are several instances of inattention to the proper translation of the tenses. Thus, verse 2,

"We that are dead to sin,"

should be "we that died to sin."

Again, verse 4, read "we were buried with Him:" and in verse 6, read "our old man was crucified with Him, &c."

The last clause of II. Cor. v. 14, should be rendered, "if one died for all, then all died."

/ So also Gal. ii. 2~~0~~, "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain."

To one whose hopes are all based on the fact that Christ has been raised from the dead, and who habitually thinks of the Saviour as the living Intercessor, ever carrying on His priestly advocacy within the Holiest of all, on behalf of His people, there is something jarring in the assertion, "Christ is dead." The Greek says no such thing, but merely asserts the fact that "He died."

In Hebrews x. 34, the correct reading of the Greek requires the following alteration in the Version, "knowing that ye have for yourselves a better and an enduring substance in heaven." The Greek *εν* = *in*, is an interpolation rejected by all the best authorities. Here the change, or rather omission, of one little word makes a very considerable difference in the meaning of the passage.

In I. Peter iii. 15,

"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts,"

we should read "the Lord Christ." Thus amended, according to the most ancient MSS., we find that Christ, in the mind of Peter, answers to Jehovah in Isaiah. See Isaiah viii. 13, 14, compared with I. Peter ii. 8.

In Rev. xxii. 14, there is strong ground for rejecting—

"They that do His commandments,"

and for adopting the reading, "Blessed are they that wash their robes." The Rhemish Version gives, according to the Vulgate, "Blessed are they that wash their stoles." In the modern editions, the antiquated term "stoles" is exchanged for "robes." The most ancient Greek MS. of the Revelation supports the reading of the Vulgate.

I would earnestly seek to impress upon the minds of my readers, that the exact translation of the Holy

Scriptures is not a matter which concerns only critics and theologians. The mis-rendering of a simple term may serve very grievously to mislead those who cannot refer to the Original; in other words, may serve to convey a wrong impression to the overwhelming majority of Christians in our country. The Greek term rendered "take no thought," in Matthew vi. 25, may lead to fanaticism on the one hand, and to false principles of interpretation on the other. He who believes that Christ really meant that His disciples should "take no thought," respecting the things of this life, will be in great danger of dishonouring the cause of truth by carelessness about his worldly concerns; or, on pretence that the words of our Lord cannot be received in their obvious meaning, will be tempted, by lax interpretation, to blunt the edge of those precepts which the Great Teacher has left for our direction.

"Be not anxious about your life,"

conveys a very different idea from that which, in our modern English, would be understood by the rendering of our Translators. In verses 27, 28, 31, 34, and x. 19; also in Luke x. 41; xii. 11, 22, 25, 26; and Philip. iv. 6, a similar correction is required.

In Hebrews x. 23, by a manifest oversight, our last Translators have substituted,

"Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith,"

for the correct reading of the previous Versions.

“The profession of *our* faith,” ought to have been “the profession of *our* hope,” or rather, as in the Bishop’s Bible, “the hope.” I am not aware that the error of our Authorized Translation, in this instance, is to be found in any Version in any language of the world. No Greek MS., and no Ancient Version sanctions the substitution of the one term for the other.

A minute attention to the exact force of the terms employed in the Original will sometimes throw considerable light upon passages, the import of which has been much controverted.

In John iii. 9, we find it asserted respecting every one who is born of God,

“He cannot sin.”

Now this expression might, in English, represent two very different statements. The words are, literally, “he is not able to sin.” Had “to sin” been expressed by the Aorist infinitive, the meaning would have been, “he cannot sin in one single instance,” or, “he is not able to sin at all.” The infinitive being in the present tense, the meaning, according to the idiom of the language, might be represented in English thus:

“He is not able to be sinning,” (*i.e.* he cannot go on in a course of sin.)

In the same Epistle, ii. 1,

“If any man sin, we have an advocate, &c.,”

might have been so expressed, as to imply habitual

sinning. Such a statement would have been contrary to the whole character of Scripture teaching. But here the verb is in the subjunctive Aorist, and is to be thus translated—"if any man have sinned," or as the Vulgate admirably gives it, "Si quis peccaverit."

In the petition for our daily bread, contained in the prayer which our Lord taught His disciples, the verb "give," in Matthew, does not exactly correspond in tense to that which is translated "give," in the Gospel of Luke. In Matthew vi. 11, we read rightly,

"Give us this day our daily bread."

The Aorist imperative is used with reference to one particular instance, the immediate reference being only to "this day," But in Luke xi. 3,

"Give us day by day our daily bread,"

a moment's reflection leads us to observe that the verb "give," expresses not a transient, but a continuous act; and accordingly, it is put in the Imperative present, and literally rendered, would be thus represented, "Be thou giving us, day by day, our daily bread." The petition, as expressed in Luke, is of larger application than as it stands in Matthew.

The instances just given from the Epistle of John and the Lord's Prayer, as recorded in the Gospels, are of a different character from those examples of mistranslation designed to illustrate the need of revision. The three last instances may serve to illustrate the precision of the Greek language, and the advantages

of studying the Original Scriptures; but the idiom of our own tongue would hardly bear any other rendering than that which we find in our Translation.

By a careful revision a considerable number of blemishes might be removed from our venerable Version, but no Translation can ever be a perfect and adequate representation of any work written in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. Perhaps no ancient books are so susceptible of being well translated, as are those writings which make up the Old and New Testaments. Still, as all translators of Homer and Horace must utterly fail in adequately representing the sublime simplicity of the former, or the exquisite diction of the latter; so no translator, however highly gifted, can transfuse into any modern tongue, the full force, expressiveness, and energy of the words of Inspiration. Precious to all believing hearts, as are the Psalms of David, no Translation ever fully expressed all that which they convey to the reader of the Original; and although all men of literary taste have done homage to the poetic grandeur and touching pathos by which the Book of Job is characterized, perhaps not a single chapter, from the third to the close, has ever been exactly represented in any ancient or modern Version.

Before the great work of revising our English Bible be actually entered on, it would be well that a far larger number of intelligent Christians were stirred up to devote themselves to the study of the Original

Scriptures. In proportion as good men found, by experience, the benefit of more exact acquaintance with the records of inspiration, so would they become interested in seeking the removal of all really important errors from our English Version. Were the more intelligent members of our several Christian communities only alive to the desirableness of a revision being made, and aware of the difficulty of the task, the knowledge of the true state of the case would not only awaken interest, but call forth prayer. To Him "from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift," must we look for qualified labourers for such an arduous service. We have many devoted students of Scripture,—many eminent for learning and disposed for work; but I question whether there are to be found in England an adequate number of Christian scholars on whom the task might hopefully be devolved. To competent learning, critical skill, sound judgment, acquaintance with the leading Ancient and Modern Versions, and other secondary qualifications, there must be added others of a still higher character. Those who might safely be trusted with such a task, must be imbued with that loving reverence for the Scriptures, and that lowly submission to the truths therein taught, which can only be found in regenerated hearts. They must resolve to begin, carry on, and complete their labours in a spirit of habitual dependence and earnest prayer. It must be to them, emphatically, a labour of love.

The toil connected with the service must be lightened by the delight they find in being so employed. They must look continually to God for direction, and strength, and success in their undertaking, and expect, not from man, but from the Master Himself, the reward of their labour. They must watch incessantly against every doctrinal or sectarian bias, and seek to acquit themselves as those who must give an account. Well may we exclaim, as we ponder over the magnitude and the difficulty of the task, and think how many influences are at work to hinder or to mar it—Are we warranted to expect its accomplishment? As we reflect, moreover, on the variety of endowments that would be needed for its execution, we are led to ask, “Who is sufficient for these things?”

But surely, the God of all grace has exhaustless resources ; and if it be for His glory, and the good of His people, that the work should be effected, He will raise up suitable workmen, and impart to them all needful aid for the accomplishment of His will concerning it.

In the mean time, while the number of those who are seeking to acquaint themselves with the original languages of Scripture will, it is to be hoped, be continually increasing ; it is at the same time desirable, that those who are only slightly conversant with such studies, should abstain from proposing, in public, any emendations on our received Translations, except such

emendations be sanctioned by competent scholars. It is to be regretted that good men, whose knowledge of Greek is of the most limited description, should take it upon them to correct our Translators on their own responsibility. It is, perhaps, still more hazardous for those who have acquired only a smattering of Hebrew to attempt the improvement of the English Old Testament. Corrections are needed both in the Old and New Testaments; but no mere school-boy acquaintance with the ancient languages is sufficient to constitute a Biblical critic. The cause of Bible revision has been brought into disrepute by rashness and officious intermeddling on the part of incompetent correctors.

In conclusion, I would desire to remind the reader how unanimous is the decision of all competent judges in relation to the very great excellence of our Authorised Translation. Taken as a whole, it is altogether superior to the LXX., or the Vulgate; while the two latter may often be of service in correcting, in particular instances, the errors of our Version. So marked is the superiority of our English Translation over those of antiquity, that the most learned of the fathers, if unable to refer to the Hebrew, were in a far less favourable position for understanding the Old Testament than any English Christian who is acquainted merely with his own mother tongue. Let any one examine the Exposition of the Psalms, by Augustine, and he will find proofs, without

number, of the grievous mis-apprehensions resulting out of the very imperfect and erroneous Version used by that devout and eloquent expositor. The LXX. Translation of the Book of Psalms abounds with intolerable blunders; and the Latin Version of that part of Scripture is almost entirely according to the Greek. The Prayer-Book Version, taken from Cranmer's Bible, of 1540, is a very great improvement upon the Vulgate; while the Version of 1611 is again still nearer the Original.

There are a considerable number of corrections required in our Authorized Psalter of 1611; there are many more needed in that of 1640; but in the Vulgate and LXX. Psalter, the errors are not only exceedingly numerous, but often of the most intolerable character. The translation of the Pentateuch in the Greek Version is, on the whole, faithful and good. The translation of the Psalms is very carelessly executed. It is therefore much to be regretted, that while the rest of the Vulgate Old Testament is Jerome's Translation of the Hebrew, the Version of the Psalms, still retained in that venerable Latin Translation, should be almost entirely from the very erroneous Greek of the LXX.

Should any one be led to enquire into the distinctive difference between our own Version and that of Jerome, let him read a few chapters in the Douay Bible, and compare them with the same chapters as given in our own. The comparison will be still more

satisfactory if he can read the Latin, of which the Douay professes to be a Version.

In Ecclesiastes i. 15, he finds in our Translation,

“That which is crooked cannot be made straight,
And that which is wanting cannot be numbered.”

This is a fair rendering of the Hebrew; but if he turns to the Vulgate, he reads :

“Perversi difficile corriguntur,
Et stultorum infinitus est numerus;”

rightly rendered in the Douay Bible,

“The perverse are hard to be corrected,
And the number of fools is infinite.”

This is a paraphrase, and not a translation, and may serve to illustrate the remarks previously made on the paraphrastic style of Jerome’s Version of the Old Testament.

Thus, let any careful reader compare the history of Joseph as given in the Vulgate, with the same chapters in our English Bible, and he will not fail to be struck with repeated instances of the marked difference between the simplicity of the narrative, as given by the latter, and the ornate and paraphrastic mode of expression by which the former is characterized.

In Genesis xliv. 18, the word “boldly,” is introduced without any warrant whatever from the Original. In verse 20,

“Whose brother is dead,”

becomes, in the Vulgate, "whose uterine brother is dead."

"We said,"

in verse 22, becomes "we suggested," in the language of Jerome.

In Ruth i. 19,

"All the city was moved about them,"

is rendered, "The report was quickly spread among all."

Such instances are not given as examples of positively erroneous translation, but as fitted to illustrate the difference between the style and manner of the Vulgate, and the mode of expression employed by our own Translators.

The Latin Version is generally acknowledged to be, at least in the historical part of the Old Testament, a good and faithful Translation. The same terms of commendation may, without the slightest hesitation, be applied to the Authorised Version of the Hebrew Scriptures.

But in addition to the general characteristic of faithfulness, the latter deserves to be held in the very highest estimation for certain qualities peculiarly its own.

Our Translation not only conveys the meaning of the Original, but so conveys that meaning as to make upon the mind of the reader an impression very similar to that which is made by the reading of the

Hebrew. The Vulgate has failed to catch the spirit and manner of the inspired writers, even when it succeeds in expressing, with general accuracy, their statements or instructions; while our venerable Version retains their simplicity, impressive seriousness, dignity, and tenderness. Let any thoughtful reader make the experiment, and he will find that, for devotional reading, for quiet, meditative perusal of the Scriptures, neither the Greek of the LXX., nor the Latin of Jerome, will supply the place of his English Scriptures. I grant that the difference may arise, in some measure, from the fact that the English Bible has been familiar to most of us from our childhood, and is therefore connected with some of the tenderest and the strongest of our earliest associations. Still, apart from such claims upon our reverence and affection, the English Bible possesses excellencies inherent in its structure, and such as may be illustrated by comparison with other faithful Translations.

In Genesis xlii. 36, we read, in our Version :

“Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away.”

This is an unadorned, unaltered representation of the actual words employed by the patriarch. Every reader of taste perceives how the very exaggeration respecting Simeon is in exact accordance with the state of the old man's feelings, as produced by successive strokes of overwhelming sorrow. A father

depressed as Jacob was would not be likely to weigh exactly the import of every word employed, or to watch against saying anything more than the literal truth. The naturalness and unaffected character of the whole description, has been reproduced by our translators, not through the aid of art or effort, but by simply retaining the phraseology of the Original. Let the reader now turn to the Vulgate, and observe the rendering given by Jerome :

“Joseph non est super, Simeon tenetur in vinculis, et Benjamin auferetis.”

“Joseph is no more, Simeon is kept in bonds, and Benjamin ye will take away.”

In this instance, the learned Father assumes the position of a corrector, instead of a translator. He evidently aims to make the patriarch's assertion more in exact accordance with the facts of the case ; but, in doing so, he is himself guilty of inaccuracy in the rendering of the clause.

It ought to be observed that there is a far closer correspondency between the Hebrew and English languages, than between the Hebrew and the Latin. This gave our Translators a great advantage over Jerome. In addition to this, I think there can be very little question that the former had imbibed far more of the Spirit of the Book on which they were occupied, than the latter appears to have done.

Of all the leading Christian teachers in the early church, Jerome was by far the most distinguished for that sort of learning which relates to Biblical interpretation. But in depth of Christian experience, as well as in certain intellectual and moral qualities, he was far inferior to Augustine. It would have been well for himself and for the church, if to his vast erudition, marvellous diligence, and untiring zeal, he had added the graces of Christian simplicity and graciousness of temper. When we compare his attainments in the Christian life with those of our earliest translator, Tyndale, we find no difficulty in accounting for the superiority of our English Translation over that of Jerome, in all such qualities as depend upon the *spiritual condition* of the respective Authors.

On the whole, it will be all but universally admitted, at least by Protestant scholars, that our Common Version is very much nearer perfection than that which was declared, by the Council of Trent, to be the Authentic and Standard Translation of the Roman Catholic Church. No Protestant Version contains such blunders as the following:—Exodus xxxiv. 29, &c., where it is said of Moses,

“He knew not that his face was horned,”

and verse 30,

“And Aaron and the children of Israel, seeing the face of Moses horned, were afraid to come near.”

In Psalm i. 1,

“The seat of the scorners,”

is rendered “the chair of pestilence.” And in Psalm ii. 12, for

“Kiss the Son lest He be angry,”

we find “embrace discipline lest, at any time, the Lord be angry.” In Psalm cxxvi. 4, instead of

“Children of youth,”

we find “the children of them that have been shaken.”

Such are some of the positive mis-renderings of the Vulgate. They abound in the Psalms,—the Version of that part of the Old Testament being, as formerly noticed, a re-production of the very erroneous Version of the LXX. But very frequent mis-translations are found also in the Book of Proverbs, for which Jerome must be held responsible.

The Latin Version, so long the only Bible of the Western Church, has been too highly commended by Romanists, and too much disparaged by Protestant Theologians. It is inferior in correctness to most Translations of modern date; but the charges of Romanist teaching, and wilful perversion of the truth, have never been satisfactorily established. Its style has been denounced as barbarous, I venture to submit, on very insufficient grounds. There are instances without number, in which the classical idiom is violated; but no translator of the Hebrew Scriptures could have employed the style of Cicero or Livy,

without running the risk of a more serious evil than that of inelegant phraseology.

Jerome must have been, from his familiarity with the writers of the purest Latinity, well qualified to write his own language with idiomatic elegance; but faithfulness to his original might have been sacrificed, had he attempted to express every Hebrew sentence in correct Latin phraseology.

In spite of the blemishes which mar the excellence of his work, and notwithstanding the faults of another kind which impaired the consistency of his Christian character, it becomes us to imitate his zeal in the study of Holy Scripture, and to venerate his memory as of one to whom, both from the Ancient and the Modern Church, a debt of gratitude is due.

In conclusion, let me sum up very briefly the convictions I have formed, and the course which I would recommend, in reference to the revision of our venerable Translation.

A nobleman, on succeeding to his paternal domains, may find that the old family castle, where for centuries his ancestors have dwelt,—although of noble structure and venerable aspect, requires some slight repairs and alterations, in order to render it a more convenient residence. Some of his friends may advise him to pull it down, and to build in its stead a modern mansion more suited to the taste of the present day; others may warn him against the slightest attempt to improve the venerable dwelling-

place, even though, in some parts, the stones may have given way, and some portions of the building may have become unfit for use ; but those will give the best counsel, who advise him to preserve the ancient structure in all its integrity, and yet to make such slight alterations as will tend to improve its usefulness, without impairing its strength, or defacing its form.

So would I advise in reference to our English Bible. Let it be revised in a spirit of devout reverence, and watchful caution. Let nothing be altered without valid reasons ; but at the same time, let those words and phrases which are become altogether antiquated, and consequently unintelligible to ordinary readers, be exchanged for the corresponding expressions in modern English ; and let manifest mis-translations be corrected. A revision thus conducted, not in a spirit of wanton innovation, but under a sense of responsibility to God, and with an upright purpose to glorify His name, could not fail to benefit the Church.

So far from detracting from the excellence of that Book which all English Christians so highly prize, such a revision would still more serve to endear it to our hearts, inasmuch as it would thus become an instrument still better adapted "for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

1833 *mf*



